

Remarks at the National Governors Association Dinner

February 11, 2023

Please, everyone, have a seat. Let me begin by saying thank you, thank you, thank you for being here. It's a long trip for a lot of you, and I hope you have found it worth it so far.

And good evening, everyone. I felt like we had a decent meeting yesterday. That felt good.

And you know, the thing I like about working with Governors: You're used to having to get things done——

[At this point, the President tripped over an object on the stage.]

——like tripping this President. *[Laughter]* Okay? That's okay. All right.

But all kidding aside, you know, I served in the Senate for a long, long time and Vice President for 8 years. But, Governors, you've got to get it done. You've got to fix the potholes. You've got to take care of the crime in your street. You've got to do everything.

And you can't say: "We're going to put it off. We're going to debate it for about 6 months." *[Laughter]* No, but I really mean it. So thank you. It's a pleasure working with you all.

And Jill, Kamala, and Doug and I, we are really happy to have you here in the White House.

Folks, you know, I want to thank Brad for sharing his time with us—talent tonight. Looking forward to it.

Brad, I have no talent. None. *[Laughter]* My dad used to have a band when he was college age. He didn't go to college, but when he was in high school and college. And he used to look at me, and he said: "Joey, I don't know where the hell you came from. You have no . . ." He played the clarinet. He said, "You have no lip, number one." *[Laughter]* "Number two, you have two left feet. And number three, you can't carry a tune in a wheelbarrow. But I still love you." *[Laughter]*

But look, and I want to thank the first spouses. And this is not hyperbole. I really mean this from the bottom of my heart. Especially if you're a local, meaning local in your State, all the time—you can't go to the grocery store, you can't walk out the door, you can't go anywhere without being questioned. Whatever is going on in the office, you've got to—you have to be ready to answer it. And it's not your job, but it is your job, in effect, because you keep the Governors moving. And I really mean it.

So I think people vastly underestimate how difficult it is to be a spouse of an elected official.

As Jill would tell you, being my spouse is difficult even if I weren't elected. *[Laughter]*

But all kidding aside, I want to thank you. And you know, and we've gone through a couple tough last 2 to 6 years. I mean, things have been up and down. And so you've really had to—you had to be on your toes, and you had to be ready to answer all the questions that you get asked.

And I—you know, I—as I said, I don't think it's been a tougher 2 years being a Governor. That's why we started off with a controversial piece of legislation, making sure you had enough money, each one of you. No, I mean it.

And look, I think that the partnership that we've had is—I don't want to ruin anybody's reputation here, but the partnership has been thoughtful—I mean, whether you're Republican or Democrat—on the things that affect your State.

I said I wanted to be President for everybody, not just blue States or red States, but for everybody. And I think, to the best we can, we've tried like hell to step up, particularly to the Governors and mayors that—people every day are looking at people straight in the eye, face to face, and wanting to know what's going on, what's going to happen.

And you know, I think our partnership—I think we're beginning, not because of me or my administration, but I think, hopefully, where value added, begin to rebuild the economy. We went through a heck of a tough time. And the pandemic made it a whole lot worse. And the pandemic—I think we're going to find that they're going to be writing about this. Your grandkids are going to be writing about the pandemic in terms of the impact it had on the psychology of the country, on the mental health of the country, and so much more. And you've dealt with it every single, solitary day.

You know, I know we're not going to always agree. I think you're going to agree—we're going to agree more than you pretend, but I don't blame you if you don't say we agree.

But look, I—think that when we work together, we're able to get things done. Now, I know I don't talk about bipartisanship all the time. I'm ready to fight. I'm ready, as you all are. And I've spent a lot of time in Congress and then as Vice President.

But you know, one of the things I found is—one of the reasons I made sure we had so many Governors in my administration and mayors—I mean it sincerely—because you've got to get things done.

And I kid Jennifer Granholm: If she were born in the United States, she'd be standing here talking to you, and I'd be—[laughter]—I'd be taking care of things.

But all kidding aside, you know, I think we've made some bipartisan progress. And a lot of it—for example, the idea that we have over a trillion 200 billion dollars in infrastructure to rebuild this country over the next 10 years— is because of a bipartisan action. And it matters. This matters.

And the good news is—not—well, I shouldn't say "good news." I think the most important thing we have to do is let people know what we've done, because it's just starting. I mean, people are—like, for example, when we did the legislation dealing with Pharma, people are now coming up, and I imagine they may come up to you too, and say, "You mean my—it only cost me 35 bucks and not 450 bucks?" Or we're able to negotiate drug prices—we pay the highest drug prices in the world. And because of a number of Republicans crossing over and joining us to make sure we got the legislation done, things are changing. Things are beginning to change.

And by the way, I might note parenthetically—and I don't want to get into any detail here—but parenthetically that, you know, what we did in terms of drug companies is going to—and allowing Medicare to negotiate—is we're actually going to reduce the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars. Because guess what? The Federal Government is not going to be paying all that—those expensive costs for some drugs that don't warrant being paid. And people are going to pay less for them, and it means the Federal Government is paying less taxpayers' dollars to purchase the drugs on Medicare.

So I guess my point is, you know, I think we ought to be able to—I hope we're going to get a little bit—I'm going to try—a little bit less partisan and work on the things that we can really get done to change people's lives.

And, again, we're not going to agree—we're not going to always agree. But you know, I think when we work together, it works.

And I'm not going to go into any detail about the infrastructure law and the CHIPS and Science Act. And I know that you guys don't want any of those fabs in your States. [Laughter]

There's only \$300 billion going to be spent. You know? What the hell—who needs that, right?
[*Laughter*]

But the main thing—reason I'm happy about that is, I'm determined as you are, because I know a number of you Republican Governors, you're determined that America lead the world again, dammit—not joking—lead the world again in manufacturing, lead the world again in the economy.

I was talking about the CHIPS and Science Act investing in America. Again, I called the Governor of Illinois—I'm not joking—who encouraged me to keep moving on this. Because, look, it's going to make a gigantic difference.

We used to spend 2 percent of our entire GDP on research and development in America. We spend 0.7 percent. We used to be number one; we're number 17.

So we're changing things. This is the United States America. And you guys and women know it better than I do.

So, look, I want to thank Governor Murphy and Governor Cox for their leadership. And I'd like to—and, Governor Cox, I promise I won't tell anybody how much I like you. [*Laughter*] We'll keep it quiet as long as we can.

But, all kidding aside, I'd like to make a toast, if I can find a glass. Oh, there it is.

Now, the reason I have my glass in my left hand: My grandfather, Ambrose Finnegan, who was an All-American football player at Santa Clara and a newspaper guy up in Scranton, Pennsylvania—he used to say, "If you don't drink"—and I'm the only Irish you ever met that's never had a drink—"if you don't drink, then you should have to do your toast, if it's not alcohol, with your left hand, not your right hand." And that's what I'm about to do.

So I don't want my——

[*The President looked upward.*]

Grandpops, I'm doing it right. [*Laughter*]

And look, I'd like to make a toast to remembering who in God's name we are. We're the United States of America. We can get big things done if we do it together.

God bless America, and God bless all of you. Hear, hear.

[*The President offered a toast.*]

And by the way, now I've got to make an introduction. Now I'm going to turn it over to Governor Cox. There's press in the room, so be careful. Don't say anything nice. Okay? Come on.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:27 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Kamala D. Harris and her husband Douglas C. Emhoff; musician Bradley D. Paisley; Secretary of Energy Jennifer L. Granholm, in her former capacity as Governor of Michigan; Gov. Jay R. "J.B." Pritzker of Illinois; and Gov. Philip D. Murphy of New Jersey, in his capacity as chair, and Gov. Spencer J. Cox of Utah, in his capacity as vice chair, of the National Governors Association. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Cox, Spencer J.; Emhoff, Douglas C.; Granholm, Jennifer M.; Harris, Kamala D.; Murphy, Philip D.; Paisley, Bradley D.; Pritzker, Jay R. "J.B."

Subjects: Bipartisanship; COVID–19 pandemic; Governors Association, National; Illinois, Governor; Infrastructure improvements; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Mental health awareness, efforts to address; New Jersey, Governor; Prescription drug costs, reduction efforts; Research and development; Secretary of Energy; Semiconductor manufacturing; Utah, Governor; Vice President.

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